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A REVIEW

OF

Mr AITKEN's

Outlines of the Theory and Cure Of FEVER,

On plain and rational Principles.

WITH

A POETICAL ADDRESS TO

NONSENSE.

Thick darkneſs overſhadows all his bounds;
PALPABLE *darkneſs.* MILTON.

Sold at the Infirmary at Twelve,
At the College-gate at One o'clock afternoon,
And no where elſe.

[Price Sixpence.]

To NONSENSE.

TREMENDOUS Pow'r! before whoſe awful ſhrine
The ſtarveling Poets bow, in hopes to dine;
Before whoſe throne ten thouſand Authors ſtand,
And anxious wait their ſov'reign's dread command;
Aſſiſt me, NONSENSE! bend thy callous ear;
If thou canſt hear an humble ſtranger's pray'r.
Teach me to ſing thy dear, thy darling ſon,
Th' IMMORTAL DOCTOR, with his PATENT-GUN.
On him direct thy ſable Godhead ſhow'rs,
In native darkneſs, all thy PLASTIC POW'RS.
Thy PLASTIC PROCESS form'd his dark OUTLINES,
Where Nonſenſe cloth'd in duſky ſplendor ſhines;
Where ſcatter'd wide, by thy abſurd command,
In dire *derangement* his Ideas ſtand;
By thee inſpir'd his muddy ſtrains he pours,
And blund'ring on, thro' thick, thro' thin, he ſcours;
No ray of light his wooden ſoul pervades,
Nor airy Fancy paints her various ſhades;
No learning, judgement, common ſenſe, is found,
But all is darkneſs in the vaſt profound.
Lo! at his feet expiring GRAMMAR lies,
While mangled LANGUAGE in convulſions dies:

See, words on words in mad confuſion hurld,
He cries, are the'ries to reform the world!
With antique diction ſee ſtrange whims combin'd,
In jumbling jargon uncouth phraſes join'd;
New words are coin'd, the ſenſe of others chang'd,
Enormous ſymptoms of a brain *derang'd*.
To Senſe IMPALPABLE, to Reaſon loſt,
By jarring Nonſenſe thro' wild Chaos toſt,
Lo! how he labours, plunges, and confounds,
Lo! how bewilder'd in his muddy mounds.
As when a puddle, ſwell'd by ſudden rains,
O'erflows with filth, and deluges the plains,
Obſcur'd by mud is nature's lovely green,
Nor pleaſant herb, nor fragrant flow'r is ſeen,
Dead cats, *et cet'ra*, round lie thick beſtrown,
And dirt on all ſides by the ſtream is thrown;
The hapleſs paſſenger is mir'd, and ſinks,
While round the torrent rages, roars, and ſtinks;
Thus o'er fair Science BOMBARDINIAN glides,
Obſcures and ſullies with his blund'ring tides,
And with philanthropy the quack's pretence,
His four-pence pamphlet ſwells to eighteen-pence.
From place to place th' empiric hero flies,
And his own praiſes trumpets to the ſkies.

" Think not to fright me with a mighty name;
" With ſage Hippocrates, or Syd'nham's fame;
" I all Phyſicians, nay all quacks excell,
" My future greatneſs, lo! what ſigns foretell.
" My pow'rful breath ſhall Error's triumph blaſt,
" My laurels flouriſh, and my fame ſhall laſt.
" Some may indeed correct a ſlight miſtake,
" Or the foundations of a ſyſtem ſhake;
" But I, in med'cine bleſt with matchleſs ſkill,
" Like great Drawcanſir, all on both ſides kill;
" I tread them down, their vital flame I quench,
" Erroneous Syſtems raze, both root and branch.
" O, had kind nature made me but a God!
" I'd ſhun the path the world's Creator trod,
" From off the ſtage this tyrant Death I'd drive,
" And men and beaſts alike preſerve alive;
" Celeſtial health ſhould ſpread from pole to pole,
" And life unbounded gladden every ſoul.
" No ſigh, no murmur, the wide world ſhould hear,
" From ev'ry eye, I'd wipe off ev'ry tear;
" I'd fill my pockets, and my patients fleece,
" And cure the world for FIFTY POUNDS apiece."

A REVIEW, &c.

AN apology for troubling the public with animadverſions on ſuch a contemptible performance as Mr Aitken hath iſſued, would have been indiſpenſibly neceſſary, had it not, by being made the ſubject of converſation in the Medical Society, attained a degree of importance, to which, by its own merits it could not pretend. In what manner the Society were induced to admit that pamphlet as a ſubject of debate, is not my buſineſs to inquire; but I feel for them, as having thus run the riſk of rendering themſelves deſpicable in the eyes of every ſober and rational perſon. I am the more concerned on this account, as a gentleman, from our ſiſter kingdom, eminent in his profeſſion, happened to be preſent at one of thoſe debates; and, did I imagine that the author of the pamphlet was capable of the feelings of other men, I ſhould be ſorry for him on the ſame account.

If any thing farther is neceſſary to be added by way of preface, it is, that the ENORMITY of the author's vanity requires a ſevere reprehenſion; as it hath prompted him to boaſt of having obtained a complete victory with regard to his performance, which either was not attacked, or, as far as the overbearing manner of its author would allow a fair debate, was completely anſwered.

In animadverting upon this performance, I find myſelf at a loſs, not for want of matter for criticiſm, but from having too much of it. Every ſentence indeed is ſuch a piece of complete nonſenſe, that it would be ſufficient to ſink the credit of any other performance whatever; what then are we to think of a work compoſed of nothing elſe beſides ſentences of that kind? To expoſe the abſurdity of it in every part, would far exceed the limits I have preſcribed to myſelf; I

ſhall therefore only point out ſome of the moſt remarkable paſſages, where his words, inſtead of conveying any inſtruction, ſeem to have been put down for no other purpoſe than to fill up the book, and conſequently might have been ſuperſeded by words or letters wrote down at random.

In the firſt paragraph, our author tells us, that Organization is "the natural arrangement of ultimate component parts into fibrous or vaſcular ſtructure, animal or vegetable." The uſe of definitions, among ordinary writers, at leaſt, is to explain one thing which is obſcure, by another which is more evident, and better known; but here, the obſcurity pervades the whole. Every body knows, that matter hath ultimate component parts; but we cannot know any thing about their arrangement, except what is learned from their appearance to our ſenſes in the various modifications of natural ſub-

ſtances; which, in the preſent inſtance, is the fibrous and vaſcular ſtructure of animals or vegetables. The definition therefore amounts to nothing more than this, that organization is the fibrous and vaſcular ſtructure of animals or vegetables; or, in other words, that organization is an animal or vegetable body.

In a perfect conformity to ſuch an exordium, are we led through the whole book. The next paragraph acquaints us, that animal and vegetable bodies derive their reſpective powers and ſpecial qualities from organization, i. e. from themſelves, according to the above definition; and, to add to the ſtupidity of the ſentence, we are told, that this organization is "ineffably peculiar and delicate;" by which means we are effectually prevented from making any inquiry into the ſources of animal and vegetable powers, if we ſhould have any inclination to

do ſo.----The third paragraph informs us, that an animal body is poſſeſſed of "animation," and the fourth, that health conſiſts in perfect "animated organization;" and thus by proper ſubſtitution of the definition of organization, inſtead of the word "organization" itſelf, we are acquainted that health conſiſts in a perfect "animated animal."

In this extraordinary manner, doth our author proceed through the whole of his performance; which, in truth, reſembles more the ravings of a perſon in Bedlam, than a treatiſe written by a public Lecturer, and Fellow of ſo many "Royal" Societies as the title page deſigns him. In ſhort, if the Introduction to this extraordinary work, conſiſting of ſix pages, or 15 paragraphs, is put into plain Engliſh, it will amount to the following poſitions. "Organization is animal, or vegetable ſtructure. Animals and vegetables derive their powers from their own ſtructure; and

what this ſtructure is we cannot tell.--- An animal body is poſſeſſed of "animation." Health is health, and diſeaſe is diſeaſe. Diſeaſe is either local or general; the former is "palpable" the latter "impalpable;" but though local diſeaſes are themſelves palpable, the matter producing them is wholly "impalpable;" for which reaſon it is named "morbific matter," or "deranging" cauſe or power. Prediſponent cauſes cprediſpoſe, and occaſional cauſes occaſion. Proximate morbific cauſe is not a morbific cauſe, but a diſeaſe.-- Nature cures diſeaſes by a "plaſtic power," this Plaſtic power operates by a "plaſtic proceſs;" and this plaſtic power and proceſs are the only means of curing diſeaſes "directly;" notwithſtanding which, the remedies employed by Phyſicians are curative means!" If any man in the world can bring forth more ſenſe or reaſon from this introduction, I am content to bear what-

ever Cenſure the author may chuſe to inflict.

After ſuch an hopeful Introduction, we are apt to conclude beforehand what Inſtruction is to be derived from the reſt of the work, and our author takes care not to diſappoint us. We are told, p. 7. that Fever is "Morbid alteration of the healthful degree of vigour; of the circulation of fluids; of ſecretion; of temperature; of ſleep; of Reflection: preceded by ſhivering, often combined with more or leſs putridity."

To this definition let us particularly attend; not on account of its accuracy, but on account of the other parts of his work, where he deviates from it. Fever ſays he, "is a morbid alteration" &c. But in his language alteration and derangement are ſynonimous; we ſhall therefore ſubſtitute the one inſtead of the other, and then we are informed that Fever is a morbid derangement

&c. But the word "morbid" is too general in this place; becauſe it applies to any other diſeaſe as well as fever. It muſt therefore be a ſpecific, or ſome other kind of derangement peculiar to fever itſelf; and not a derangement like that of the gout, ſtone, dropſy, &c. &c. The fever then is a ſpecific, or particular kind of derangement, ſuch as is to be found nowhere but in fever itſelf; yet, in par. 30. we are told, that "the ſpecific derangement produced by febrile cauſes, is the proximate cauſe of fever; i. e. the fever produced by the cauſes of fever, is the PROXIMATE CAUSE of fever! To the ſame purpoſe we are told, par. 38. that "the whole ſymptoms of fever receive a rational and ſatisfactory explanation from the propoſition, that ſpecific derangement of organization is its proximate cauſe;" that is, from the propoſition, that the fever is the proxi-

mate cauſe of itſelf. In this manner are we led in a circle throughout the whole book, without one ſingle coherent, or rational concluſion from beginning to end.

It is painful, however, to dwell on the blunders of an author in mere language. Mr Aitken hath claimed the right of inventing a dialect of his own; and of this right he hath made ample uſe. Yet, notwithſtanding any whimſical peculiarity of this kind, he would be excuſeable, if there was a poſſibility of decyphering his new language in ſuch a manner, as to make any kind of meaning out of it, when put into the words of other mortals. But, by no art have I yet been able to make his book conſiſtent with common ſenſe. In the preſent inſtance, his words certainly have no meaning. He hath not defined the outlandiſh phraſe DERANGEMENT, with which we are ſtunned on all occaſions; nor

can it be defined, in the way he has choſen to make uſe of it. In his 5th paragraph, indeed, he makes it ſynonimous with any kind of change, or alteration whatever. But when we come to particulars, this will not do. The derangement produced in the fibrous and vaſcular ſtructure by the cauſes of one diſeaſe, is not the ſame with that produced by the cauſes of another: the difference ought therefore to be particularly mentioned; for, to tell us that diſeaſes are owing to "ſpecific derangements" is only telling us in other words, that one diſeaſe is not another. Former theoriſts have particularized the cauſes of fever; but Mr Aitken will neither allow the cauſes aſſigned by others to be juſt, nor aſſign any adequate cauſe himſelf. If the organization, or the fibrous and vaſcular ſtructure of the human body, is deranged, or altered, it muſt be in ſome particular way. Perhaps ſome

parts of the veſſels may be contracted, ſo that the fluids cannot circulate freely through them; but this would be SPASM, which is not Mr Aitken's derangement; for he is very angry with thoſe who ſay that ſpaſm is the cauſe of fever. Perhaps then the veſſels, inſtead of being contracted, are too much relaxed, ſo that the fluids are too eaſily moved by the power of the heart. But this would be DEBILITY, which our author alſo reprobates. We ſhall not, however, deſpair, as long as a ſuppoſition can be found. Perhaps the vaſcular ſyſtem is not altered in any reſpect, only there is an increaſed action of the heart and arteries. But this would be no derangement, but an EXCITEMENT of the nervous power. What ſhall we ſay next? If the veſſels are neither contracted, nor enlarged, neither ſtrengthened, nor weakened, what change is it which is wrought upon them?

There occurs to me only one other ſuppoſition as poſſible; namely, that they are huddled together in a maſs of confuſion; and indeed, in whatever way we view Mr Aitken's treatiſe, we muſt acknowledge, that it contains as complete a ſyſtem of CONFUSION, as perhaps ever exiſted.

Thus much with regard to the accuracy of Mr Aitken's definitions, and the inſtruction to be derived from them. We muſt next conſider what is to be learned from what he hath delivered concerning the indications of cure. Here, however, we ſhall only meet with the ſame kind of language applied to a different ſubject. We have been told already, par. 14. that nature cures diſeaſes by a plaſtic power, and that this plaſtic power operates by a plaſtic proceſs. Mr Aitken therefore wiſely obſerves, that one of the indications of cure in fever is to promote the plaſtic, or healing pro-

ceſs; i. e. one of the indications of cure is to promote the cure! Another of his indications is the alleviation of ENORMOUS ſymptoms. But, in what manner are we to alleviate the enormity of theſe ſymptoms, ſince the plaſtic power of nature hath taken the plaſtic proceſs entirely into its own hands, ſo that the poor doctor has nothing to do but to look on, and receive his fee? Well, indeed, may our author cry out, (par. 68.) "Happy, thrice happy, the ſick, to whom heaven ſends practitioners duly poſſeſſing this quality!" What quality? Is it that of taking the fee for nothing, or that of alleviating enormous ſymptoms? If it is the latter, who hath ever heard, ſince the days of Ariſtotle, of ſymptoms, or any thing elſe, alleviated by an occult quality? But, however much our author may deal in the occult ſciences himſelf, he ſeems to be very angry with thoſe who in-

cline to call in powers of the ſame kind to their aſſiſtance. Almoſt all phyſicians have aſſerted the exiſtence of a certain unknown power, which they called the vis medicatrix naturae, and to which they aſcribed many wonderful effects. But when the operations of this power come to be explained, all that can be ſaid, is, that nature cures diſeaſes by a "medicinal power." Againſt this unfortunate power Mr Aitken hath declared the moſt violent and furious war. He tells us, that it is an imaginary ſemi-rational power, and to believe in it is an hurtful deluſion. But, if the powers aſcribed to nature by Mr Aitken, are not "medicinal", in what manner do they cure diſeaſes? I hope, he doth not mean to inſinuate that nature removes diſeaſes by a pernicious, or poiſonous power. As to the other properties of his powers, I have nothing to ſay; but, ſure I am, that his

account of them is not even SEMI-rational.

But, to come at laſt to the point; let us ſee in what manner Mr Aitken propoſes to aſſiſt the plaſtic power, or plaſtic proceſs of nature; or, in common language, what is the difference between his practice and that of other phyſicians. Here he begins with diſcrediting all attempts to arreſt, as he calls it, or extinguiſh the febrile courſe. Attempts of this kind, he ſays, derange organization, and impede the plaſtic proceſs. In like manner, every remedy which hath been preſcribed by other practitioners, is rejected and treated with contempt, not only without reaſon, but without the leaſt attempt at any thing like reaſoning. Emetics are not to be given, becauſe they are both negatively and poſitively deranging. Sudorifics are deſtructively deranging, and epiſpaſtics produce inflammatory derangement. In

this manner is the whole materia medica diſcarded at once, and in its place we are allowed to alleviate the enormous ſymptoms with Ale, Opium, and Glauber's ſalt, taken ſeparately, it is to be hoped.

When an author proceeds in ſuch a manner as this, he is abſolutely below all criticiſm. Nevertheleſs, if I may for once reaſon with Mr Aitken, I will aſk him, If aliment is ſuch a wonderful cure for fevers of all kinds, for it ſeems not to have entered his brain that there was any difference among them, how comes it to paſs, that aliment doth not always prevent the acceſſion of fever? That the beſt aliments are not ſufficient for this purpoſe might be proved by ten thouſand inſtances: at preſent the following will be ſufficient. When Prince Eugene was engaged in a war with the Turks, he had occaſion to enter the unwholeſome parts of Hungary, the air of

which is very apt to produce fevers of a moſt malignant nature. A prodigious mortality accordingly enſued among the troops, and it became the principal object of every one's care to preſerve himſelf from the ſickneſs. Among the reſt, Prince Eugene was particularly careful of his aliment. Every thing he either eat or drank, was moſt unexceptionable in its quality. Freſh proviſions were ſent him every day from Vienna, and even the water which he uſed, was brought from another country. Yet, notwithſtanding all the care he could take, the prince was ſeized with a dyſentery, which, in all probability, would have put an end to his life, had he not in a ſhort time left that unhealthy part of the country.

In the midſt of this raging ſickneſs, however, Count Boneval, with all his domeſtics, enjoyed the moſt perfect health; inſomuch that they became

the admiration, and the envy of all who ſaw them; and this without being in the leaſt more attentive to their diet than their neighbours. The only precaution uſed by that nobleman was, to take every day a ſmall quantity of the infuſion of Peruvian bark in brandy; and he obliged all his domeſtics to take the ſame. By theſe means he not only preſerved himſelf and family for that ſeaſon, but lived afterwards to an advanced age in the moſt unhealthy parts of Hungary, which are known to be as fatal to the human frame, as any country upon earth.

In this caſe, I aſk Mr Aitken, were not the merits of aliment, and of the Peruvian bark, fairly put in competition, and the ſuperiority of the latter as a preventative of fever, clearly evinced? He cannot be ignorant, that the fact I have juſt now recited, is delivered by practitioners of at leaſt equal credit and character with himſelf.

What reaſon then can Mr Aitken aſſign for his aſſertion par. 118. that the Peruvian bark, admitting its antiſeptic power, its influence on febrile putridity muſt fall greatly below that of the GRAND ALIMENTARY ANTISEPTICS mentioned in par. 100? But when we look at this remarkable paragraph, we find the antiſeptics there mentioned are, (laugh not, gentle reader) the TEPID BATH, DILUTION, and OPIUM!

I have now wearied myſelf with criticiſm; for which Mr Aitken's performance affords more abundant matter than any other I ever ſaw. Even the catalogue of ERRATA in this matchleſs pamphlet is erroneous. An error is marked in the very firſt line of the firſt page; but no ſuch error exiſts in that line, and we are not obliged to find it out any where elſe. In the ſecond, the correction is as far wrong as the error he hath marked;

and the laſt is downright nonſenſe. Errors in diction, in printing, and even in ſentiment, are no doubt the conſtant attendants on all books; and it ſhews an ill-natured diſpoſition to take advantage of theſe errors to make the author appear ridiculous: but, in the preſent inſtance, Mr Aitken hath certainly been the aggreſſor; and, by the introduction of his work into the Medical Society, hath diſcovered a degree of vanity almoſt unheard of, even among AUTHORS; at the ſame time that the total want of ſentiment, the ridiculous language, and the extreme incorrectneſs throughout the whole, may juſtly characteriſe it as a ſtandard of NONSENSE and BLUNDERING, to all future generations.